

## Tornado Safety Tips

Tornadoes can occur with little or no warning. The Department of Crime Control and Public Safety recommends that family members have a safety plan to respond quickly in case a tornado threatens at home, work or school.

### Listen to local weather broadcasts

- Listen to the radio, local television, weather channel or a NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) radio for information on any severe weather in your area.
- A *watch* means conditions are right for tornado formation; a *warning* means a tornado has actually been sighted.



### Go to the lowest level and inner rooms

- If a tornado threatens, the safest place to be is underground in a basement or storm cellar.
- If you have no basement, go to an inner hallway or smaller inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Do not open or close windows. Stay away from them.
- Stay away from skylights and large open areas.
- Stay out of gymnasiums, auditoriums and other rooms with a large expanse of roof.
- Try to find something sturdy you can get under to protect yourself from flying debris or a collapsed roof.
- Crouch on the floor in the egg position.
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck.

### Mobile homes

- If severe weather threatens seek other shelter. Even mobile homes with tie-downs are not safe from high winds.
- Know beforehand where you can go for safe shelter whenever the weather turns bad.

### If you are outside

- Lie on the ground, in a ditch or depression if possible.
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck and wait for the storm to pass.
- While waiting, be alert for the flash floods that sometimes accompany tornadoes.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in a car. A tornado can toss cars and trucks around like toys.
- If you see a funnel cloud or hear a tornado warning issued, get out of your vehicle and find safe shelter immediately.

### Danger signs

- Falling hail is a danger sign if there is a tornado watch or warning posted.
- An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado, even if a funnel is not visible.
- The wind may die down and the air may become very still before a tornado hits.
- Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm.
- It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

### **Tornado Facts**

- A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm to the ground and swirling with debris. (A funnel cloud rotates, but has no contact with the ground, no debris and is not doing any damage).
- Tornadoes usually are preceded by very heavy rain and sometimes hail.
- If hail falls from a thunderstorm, it is an indication that the storm has large amounts of energy and may be severe. In general, the larger the hailstones, the more potential for damaging thunderstorm winds or tornadoes.
- The most violent tornadoes can have wind speeds of 250 miles per hour or more.
- The typical width of a tornado is about 50 yards wide.
- An average tornado damage path is one to two miles long. However, a tornado damage path can be more than one mile wide and 50 miles long.
- The average tornado moves from southwest to northeast, though tornadoes have been known to move in any direction.
- The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 mph but may vary from nearly stationary to 70 mph.
- Tornadoes can occur throughout the year; however, the peak season in North Carolina is March through May.
- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between late afternoon and early evening, but the twisters have been known to occur at all hours of the day or night.
- The National Weather Service uses Doppler weather radar to sense the air movement within thunderstorms. Early detection of increasing rotation aloft within a thunderstorm can allow time for lifesaving warnings before a tornado forms.

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